6 Ways to Attract Diverse Early Career Talent



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In this current economy, chances are your company is looking to hire. If you're interested in hiring more Gen-Z and millennial talent, there are several things to consider.

It's important to acknowledge that early career talent in 2021 have considerably different needs and interests than generations of the past. With their unique take on social-justice issues, intense financial challenges from student-loan debt and their highly entrepreneurial spirit, this generation has particular desires that should be addressed before reaching out to hire them. Now's the time to get on the same page and offer the benefits, perks and work environment that

will bring them to the table.

Here are six considerations if you want to attract more diverse, early career talent to your business.

1. Move away from performative allyship

One hard truth that’s difficult for many companies to stomach is that Gen-Z and millennials aren’t falling forPerformative Allyship. In the past, putting up a Black Lives Matter sign in your window or posting something on social media was enough to show support for causes that attract the younger generations. But now, many Gen-Z and millennial workers can see right through it.

These generations are highly critical of performative allyship and may not want to work with a company that isn’t truthful or authentic.

We have to do business differently, with a more compassionate and empathic lens to issues of justice. With some 66% of college students in one survey citing that racism is a major problem in corporate America, it’s important to stand out with your company’s DEI efforts and show up authentically on issues that matter to early career talent. This includes where your company shows up on Black Lives Matter, #EndAsianHate, anti-semitism and more.

2. Put your company’s money and values where its mouth is.

Demonstrate authentic and actionable interest in denouncing racism, sexism and homophobia not just publically, but within the company. You can hire a DEI consultant or officer to conduct an internal audit and create a DEI action plan. Your

company can also sponsor regular, company-wide DEI learning and development experiences on a regular basis to ensure all staff are on the same page about communication, respect and inclusive practices within the workplace. Or your leadership team can take ownership and reflect internally about your company's current DEI efforts and work from there.

Even if your company isn't exactly where it wants to be with DEI, putting in the effort and demonstrating a genuine interest in reforming your company's dynamics to be more inclusive and equitable can still send a positive sign to Gen-Z and Millennial professionals looking for work.

Related: How Brands Can Go From Performative Allyship to Real Allies

3. Ask Gen-Z and millennial talent what they want in your area

If you really want diverse and talented early career professionals, your company should dive deep on what young professionals in your area want in the workplace.

Attracting young talent can be a moving target. Each generation is different and may be attracted to different benefits and perks that generations in the past may have disregarded. A good place to start is to conduct surveys with current early career talent within your company or choose a group of young professionals outside of the company and ask strategic questions about workplace needs, schedule preferences, paid time off and other perks.

If your company is located in a diverse area, get out in the community, network and meet with community leaders to gain insight on what people are looking for. Networking with early career talent and listening deeply to their concerns, desires and hopes for their future can be incredibly helpful. With

this information, you can adjust your company's benefits and perks in order to meet the exact needs of the talent you want to attract in your business.

4. Pay them a fair wage

With the current struggle for the Fight for 15 and many young professionals weighed down by student loan debt, it's important to think about how much you're able to pay early career professionals in order to be competitive and incentivize them to join your team.

But there are other rewards that could be offered to make your offer more attractive, including supporting professional-development opportunities and providing a more open work environment to encourage collaboration and socialization (more on these topics later).

Overwhelmingly, getting paid a liveable wage is on the minds of many early career talent. If you are a young company in a growth stage and have fixed salary ranges by positions, communicate that up front with clarity. Disclosing this information in your job postings and applications allows early career talent to properly assess if the opportunity aligns with their financial needs.

With some 70% of Gen-Zers believing student loans make it difficult to save, offering fair, equitable pay to support the financial needs of early-career talent, many of whom are saddled with student loan debt, is a significant step in the right direction. Offering to support young professionals in their student-loan debt repayment could also be an attractive perk. Fifty-seven percent of students in one survey said that a company offering student loan repayment could play a major factor in their decision to apply for a job.

It may sound like a lot of work to attract diverse, young talent, but the truth is: many groups like women, racial and

gender minorities have been historically underpaid. Finding a job they enjoy that actually pays them a fair wage can be very attractive to groups that have never been paid what they deserve. Your company can right the wrongs of harmful pay practices and finally pay young-talent a wage that's not only liveable, but one where they can thrive.

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5. Facilitate and encourage work-life balance

One major challenge with hiring diverse, young talent is understanding that many Gen-Zers and millennials aren't looking for the typical jobs their parents had where they're strapped to a desk 10 hours a day.

One survey found that 85% of Black students, 80% of Hispanic students and 72% of Asian students say work-life balance is very important to them when looking for a job after college. Part of promoting work-life balance includes offering flexible hours and encouraging employees to actually use their paid time off.

Another survey found that 8 out of 10 students think flexible work hours and encouraging employees to take time off are positive signs of work-life balance at a company. Other perks that signal to early career professionals that your company values work-life balance can include generous paid-time off, collaborative team-building challenges, company-sponsored educational opportunities, gym memberships and more.

New professionals are looking for work that not only supports them financially, but also meets their mental, physica and emotional needs. Everyone wants to enjoy life outside of work and if your company can use compassion, empathy, and promote a

positive work-life balance, young professionals will be more drawn to work with you.

6. Build in opportunities for growth

Another aspect of this current generation is their desire for growth and personal development. Previous generations may have been happy to do the same job for 40 years, get a 5% raise once a year, but largely remain stable in their role and duties.

Younger generations are different. One survey showed that Gen-Z in particular is expected to be the most entrepreneurial generation, with 41% interested in starting their own businesses at some point.

The spirit of entrepreneurship and the energy to innovate and create new things can be a benefit to your company, if it's channeled in the right way. Supporting Gen-Zers and Millennials in using their creative energy to support your company's developmental goals can invite fresh, cutting-edge ideas into your company.

But early career talent don't just want to innovate; they also want to build the skills that help them grow and develop. More than 70 percent of Gen-zers explicitly said they want their employer to invest in their development of certain skills. As early career professionals, the energy, creativity and desire to grow is there, but the skills and experience are lacking.

By investing in the growth and development of early career talent and encouraging them to innovate, your company can attract increasingly helpful, conscious and productive young professionals.

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